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Thematic discussion

Thematic discussion for the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2009 of the Economic and Social Council: selection of a theme

Note by the Secretary-General

Summary

The present note is intended to facilitate consultations among Member States in the selection of a theme for the thematic discussion for the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2009 of the Economic and Social Council.

Pursuant to the 2005 World Summit Outcome, the General Assembly, in its resolution 61/16, decided that the Council should continue to promote global dialogue, including through a thematic discussion on a theme from economic, social and related fields to be decided by the Council and informed by a report of the Secretary-General.

In its 2007 thematic discussion, the Council addressed the theme "Strengthening efforts at all levels to promote pro-poor sustained economic growth, including through equitable macroeconomic policies", which was closely related to the theme of the 2007 annual ministerial review, "Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development". For 2008, the Council adopted the theme "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development, taking into account current challenges", which is also closely related to the theme of the 2008 annual ministerial review, "Sustainable development", and addresses the follow-up to the Council's 2003 ministerial declaration.

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The experience of the past two years indicates that the Council has chosen a theme for the thematic discussion that is closely related to the theme of the annual ministerial review, with a focus on emerging issues within the specific area. The theme adopted by the Council for the 2009 annual ministerial review is "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health".

The 2005 World Summit also made important decisions that address the linkages between peace and development. To build on those linkages, the Council may wish to select an emerging theme that addresses the challenges of development in conflict situations.

The following theme is therefore recommended for the thematic discussion for the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2009 of the Council: "The impact of conflict on the implementation of the global public health agenda".

Selection of a theme for the 2009 thematic discussion

1. The 2005 World Summit called upon the Economic and Social Council to promote global dialogue and partnership on global policies and trends in the economic, social, environmental and humanitarian fields. For this purpose, the Council should serve as a quality platform for high-level engagement among Member States and with the international financial institutions, the private sector and civil society on emerging global trends, policies and action and develop its ability to respond better and more rapidly to developments in the international economic, environmental and social fields.

2. Pursuant to the 2005 World Summit Outcome, the General Assembly, in its resolution 61/16, decided that the Council should continue to promote global dialogue, including, through a thematic discussion on a theme from economic, social and related fields to be decided by the Council and informed by a report of the Secretary-General.

A. Elements to be considered in selecting the theme

3. In selecting the theme for its 2009 thematic discussion, the Council may wish to take into account the following considerations:

(a) The thematic discussion should be on a major economic and/or social policy theme of topical interest;

(b) The theme should allow for an integrated and interdisciplinary approach;

(c) The theme should enable the Council to receive the maximum benefit from ministerial participation and from the presence of the heads of agencies, funds, programmes and other bodies of the United Nations system, including the international trade and financial institutions;

(d) The deliberations of the high-level segment should provide political impetus for building areas of convergence and facilitate the consideration of the issues in question, including the emergence of new recommendations on the issues in the relevant forums (General Assembly resolution 45/264, annex, para. 5 (d) (i));

(e) In the event that a matter of high urgency and priority subsequently emerges that would qualify as a theme for the high-level segment, the Council may, as appropriate, consider that theme as an additional topic for discussion at its high-level segment (General Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I, para. 53).

4. In the past two years, with the implementation of the annual ministerial review function, the Council has chosen a theme that is closely related to the theme of the annual ministerial review. In its 2007 thematic discussion, the Council addressed the theme "Strengthening efforts at all levels to promote pro-poor sustained economic growth, including through equitable macroeconomic policies", while the annual ministerial review considered the theme "Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development". For 2008, the Council adopted the theme "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development, taking into account current challenges", which is also closely related

to the theme of the 2008 annual ministerial review, "Sustainable development", and addresses the follow-up to the Council's 2003 ministerial declaration.

Themes examined by the Economic and Social Council at its high-level segments since 2000

5. The following themes have been examined by the Council at its high-level segments since 2000:

2008
Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development, taking into account current challenges

2007
Strengthening efforts at all levels to promote pro-poor sustained economic growth, including through equitable macroeconomic policies

2006
Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development

2005
Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities

2004
Resources mobilization and enabling environment for poverty eradication in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010

2003
Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development

2002
Contribution of human resources development, including in the areas of health and education, to the process of development

2001
Role of the United Nations system in supporting the efforts of African countries to achieve sustainable development

2000
Development and international cooperation in the twenty-first century: the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based global economy

B. Proposal by the Secretary-General

6. Following the successful launch in 2007 of the two distinctive new functions, the annual ministerial review of progress made in the implementation of the

internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and the biennial Development Cooperation Forum, in 2008 the Council will hold the first formal session of the Development Cooperation Forum.

7. Accordingly, the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2008 of the Council will include a high-level policy dialogue; a thematic discussion; the annual ministerial review; and the first formal session of the Development Cooperation Forum. Since the Development Cooperation Forum will meet on a biennial basis, the high-level segment in 2009 will not include a Forum session.

8. In order to focus on the discussion during the busy programme of the high-level segment and to receive the maximum benefit from ministerial participation and the presence of the heads of agencies, funds, programmes and other bodies of the United Nations system, there is a need to ensure that the theme for the 2009 thematic discussion is closely related to the theme of the 2009 annual ministerial review. The positive experience of the past two years indicates the success of this approach. The Council has chosen a theme for the thematic discussion that is closely related to the theme of the annual ministerial review, with a focus on emerging issues within the subject area. The theme adopted by the Council for the 2009 annual ministerial review is "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health".

9. The theme of the thematic discussion could also build on the 2005 World Summit Outcome. The Summit took important decisions with regard to the linkages between peace and development, which the Council could reinforce by selecting a theme that addresses the impact of conflict on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the broader internationally agreed development goals.

10. The success of the first annual ministerial review, in 2007, strongly supports the view that the review will further strengthen the Council's capacity to contribute in the area of security and development, as it will give the Council the opportunity to continually assess how conflict is affecting the implementation of the development agenda, and to review and share lessons learned on how strategies based on the Millennium Development Goals can help forestall conflict.

11. In its resolution 57/337, the General Assembly supported a more active involvement of the Council in the prevention of armed conflict, taking into account the need to promote socio-economic measures, including economic growth, in support of poverty eradication and development, as a core element.

12. Against this backdrop, it is important to emphasize that the issue of conflict and health needs to be given serious consideration. Violent conflict is a major public health problem worldwide; each year, millions of people die or are permanently disabled as a result of injuries sustained during violent conflicts.

13. In addition to death and disability, violent conflicts produce economic and social upheavals: populations may be displaced, infrastructure destroyed and livelihoods lost. The consequences of violent conflict for populations — overcrowding, malnourishment, exposure, contamination, trauma, injury and epidemic diseases that may thrive and rapidly spread under these conditions — have implications for public health in terms of both policy and practice that are just beginning to be understood.

14. Accordingly, the following theme is recommended for the thematic discussion for the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2009 of the Council: "The impact of conflict on the implementation of the global public health agenda".

15. A thematic discussion on that theme would enable the Council to make a distinct contribution to the more effective integration of the special perspectives of conflict situations in the global public health policies and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as in the follow-up processes of United Nations summits and conferences, in particular the 2005 World Summit. The outcome of the discussion could also make a substantive contribution to the work of the Organization on peacebuilding and the transition from relief to development.